'Carson City' is home for dairy cows

Carson Farms, Inc., is operated by Dan Carson and his son, Danny. The farm, located at "Carson City" in the central portion of Appomattox County, has been in the Carson family for four generations.

The Carsons are milking between 70 and 80 cows at present. Their total herd, including heifers and replacement calves,is 150 animals.

The Carsons use a very refined three-year crop rotation system, in corn, barley and alfalfa. They raise some soybeans, as well.

This year, the Carsons planted 125 acres of corn, 70 acres of barley, 35 acres of alfalfa and 40 acres of soybeans.

Their year-round silage feeding program features automatic feeding apparatus and three automatic silage systems.

They have recently installed an all-steel calf barn, which Dan says has been very successful in keeping problems associated with raising calves to a minimum.

The Carson herd averages 15,564 pounds of milk per cow per year, at present.

Danny takes care of the artificial insemination duties on this dairy operation.

He uses a "Select Sires" catalogue, from which he can pick semen from a bull which has produced offspring with the characteristics needed for matching with any particular cow.

"For example," he says, "if you have a cow with weak udders or weak legs, you would pick a bull that the catalogue says has consistently produced offspring with strong udders and legs. Or, if a cow has produced milk with less butterfat than you want, you would breed her using semen from a bull that has sired cows which have produced high butterfat content."

The price of the semen ranges from $2 or $3 per ampule to as much as $100 per ampule, but usually the cost is in the $20 to $30 range.

Danny notes that he has been running "a 75 percent success rate on first service" artificial inseminations.

Dan, who with his wife served as Baptist missionaries in Africa last year, owns the farm with his brother and his mother. He notes that his father, the late Eugene Carson, Sr., built the first Grade A dairy barn in Appomattox County. The building was taken down five years ago to make room for a newer, modern facility.

DAN CARSON AND HIS SON DANNY check the corn crop in one of their fields. The Carsons have a very successful crop-rotation system. Dan says that his farm has not gotten the rain that has fallen on surrounding areas this spring, but the crops are not in bad shape.

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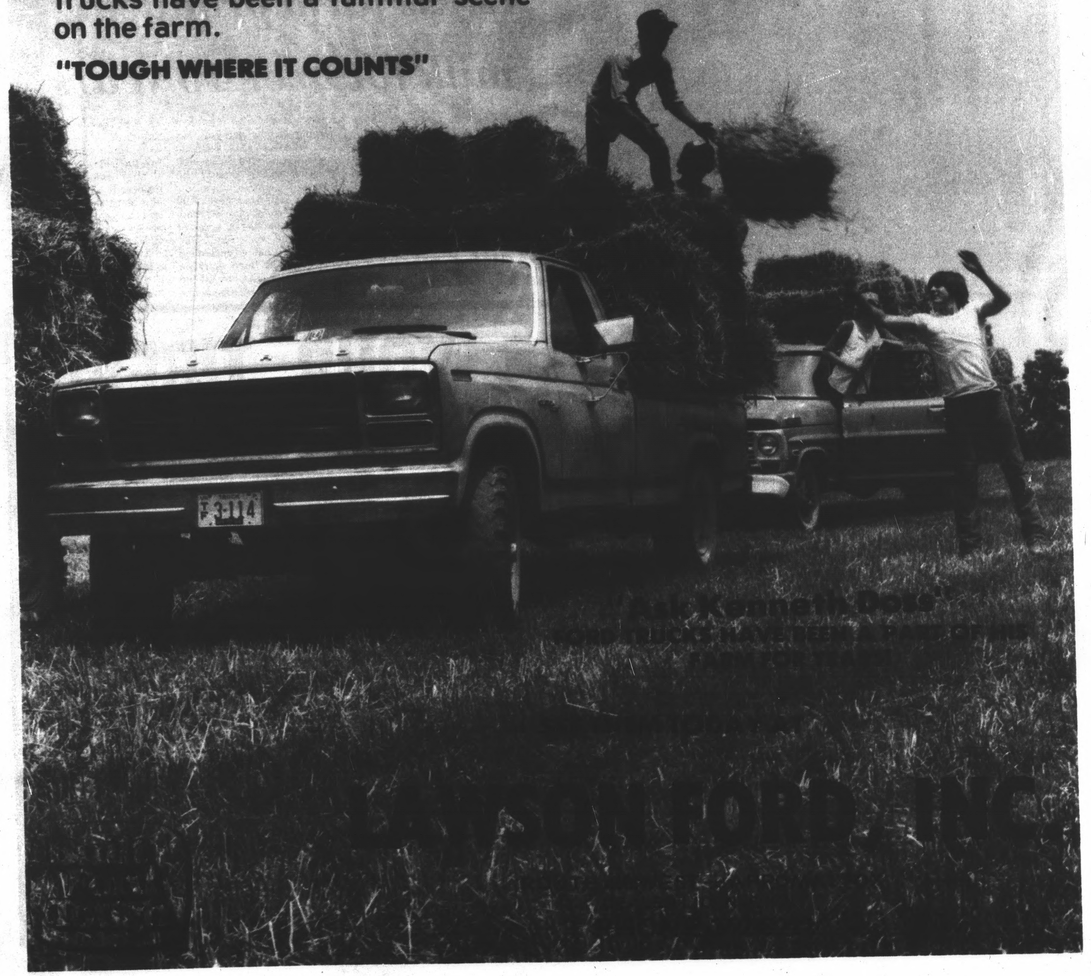
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